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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2014

## Welland plant up for grabs

A \$50-million biodiesel production facility in Dain City has fallen into receivership.  
Page 16

## Fake or real?

It's an annual question at Christmas time, whether to have a fresh-cut tree or a synthetic one.  
Page 22

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## Rink takes shape



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Noah  
Abdelmaksoud  
saw the idea  
he pitched to  
Port Colborne  
city council  
for an outdoor  
skating  
rink come  
to fruition  
Sunday, with  
the help  
of several  
neighbourhood  
volunteers.  
See story on  
page 2.



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# LOCAL NEWS

■ **COMMUNITY:** Noah Abdelmaksoud's rink request starts to take shape



GREG FURMINGER/QMI AGENCY NAGARA

Volunteers help to put together the foundations for a community skating rink at Port Colborne's Chestnut Park.

## Port Colborne kids awaiting deep freeze

**GREG FURMINGER**  
Tribune Staff

Noah Abdelmaksoud's rink of dreams is taking shape in Port Colborne's Chestnut Park.

It's there that more than a dozen volunteers were hard at work Sunday, including the 11-year-old's hockey teammates, local high school students and parents.

"Seeing all those guys — it's really amazing to see how

everything's coming together," said Noah, his hands caked with mud.

Noah, an 11-year-old Grade 6 student at St. Therese Catholic Elementary School, is the boy who successfully pitched the idea of an outdoor rink to city councillors last month.

Politicians said yes and Noah's idea started snowballing, with city staff rushing on logistics.

Volunteers put in place

in the span of under three hours Sunday the frame of the rink, fashioned with boards normally used for the east-side park's temporary bocce courts.

Frank's Home Hardware Building Centre provided the plastic rink liner and, said Noah's father, Mamdouh, Algoma stripped the field of snow the day prior to make the building exercise that much easier.

"It's really exciting," Dad said of the weekend undertaking. "Other than being muddy, the weather's nice."

"It's been a whole community thing."

Port Colborne High School technology skills teacher Vic Barker helped some of the teens who turned out Sunday. Well, sort of.

"I'm the boss, they're the labourers," he quipped.

Barker recalled skating on

ponds in his younger days, and suggested outdoor skating should be experienced by everyone.

"If we have a winter like last year, it'll be great," he said. "Every town should have this."

The first flooding of the rink — when the mercury dips — will be made with assistance from the fire department.

When the rink is up and running, it's expected that the

neighbourhood volunteers will clean and maintain it.

Noah can't wait.

"I love skating. It's fun for everyone."

greg.furminger@sunmedia.ca  
Twitter: @GregAtTheTrib



# LOCAL NEWS

■ NATIONAL BROADCAST: Former NHLers mingle with crowds at festival-like event

## Fans flock to Niagara's Hometown Hockey

KARENA WALTER  
QMI Agency Niagara

It was the perfect photo for a hockey-loving St. Catharines family's Christmas card.

Three-month-old Gavin decked out in his Toronto Maple Leafs finest, being held by former Leafs star Darcy Tucker.

"If my wife sees this, she'll want another one!" Tucker joked with Gavin's mom, Heather Neal, as they posed for a picture on Church St. in St. Catharines during the Roger's Hometown Hockey festival.

The NHL alum had a steady stream of fans wanting to meet him Saturday during the huge hockey tour downtown that took over a section Market Square, Church St. and James St.

Tucker said travelling across the country with the tour's Scotiabank Community Locker Room has been an eye-opening experience, with different cultural experiences and temperatures, like the -40°C temperature they endured in Brandon, Man.

His favourite part?

"Meeting people and hearing their minor hockey stories," he said. "For me, that kind of fills your heart with warmth. We've got a great future in our game."

Heather Neal said when she read Tucker was going to be downtown, her first thought was to take Gavin to see him. It was a bonus that Tucker asked to hold him.

"Darcy was one of my favourites," said Gavin's grandfather, Al Hoare. "He played with nothing but heart."

Besides meet-and-greets with NHL alumni, Rogers Hometown Hockey brought live bands, children's activities, puck shooting practice, a ball hockey rink, National Hockey League uniforms and a warming lodge with free hot chocolate to the city core.

It all culminated with Ron MacLean broadcasting live from St. Catharines downtown at 7:30 p.m. Sunday during the pre-game show for the Calgary Flames versus Chicago Blackhawks game.

"The crowds have been great," said Sebastian Gatica, senior manager of communications for Rogers Hometown Hockey, standing next to a lineup of people waiting to meet another ex-Leaf, Shane Corson, on Sunday afternoon.

"There's lots for fans to be excited about," St. Catharines was the tenth city in the Rogers Hometown Hockey tour, which plans to hit 25 altogether. Gatica said Sudbury drew the largest crowds last week with 10,000 people, but the predicted St. Catharines would be one of the

top turnouts.

Everything at the event was free from sponsors, with T-shirts for the kids, gloves and hats, autographed pictures, coffee and activities. Nothing was being sold on site.

"This really is about giving back to fans," Gatica said.

"Celebrating the game that connects us all."

Participants young and old were decked out in hockey jerseys from local teams to NHL favourites.

St. Catharines resident Ed Smit had the ultimate accessory — a full-scale imitation Stanley Cup he made by hand 16 years ago because he thought it would be a good conversation piece on his mantle.

"I'm being mobbed," said Smit, an electronics technician from St. Catharines who brought the cup to the event Saturday to show it off and get some photos with NHL alumni.

He ended up setting it on a picnic table so dozens of people could pose with it.

"It's a hockey festival. There's no better place, really," he said, adding the Hometown Hockey event was a good thing for the city.

"You don't see a lot of this kind of thing in St. Catharines. It's a huge hockey community. We have the IceDogs, the new arena — it's nice to get some attention in this community, something other than Niagara Falls. We have a lot of history here and it seems to be coming out this weekend."

Eric Sportel of St. Catharines stopped to pose with the cup and also praised the event.

"Good weather, good turnout. It's a nice local atmosphere," he said. "Having something of this magnitude is good for the city and Niagara region as a whole."

As part of the Hometown Hockey Tour, three minor hockey associations — Garden City Minor Hockey Association, St. Catharines Female Hockey Association and CYO — received \$5,000 each from Scotiabank.

Dave Gerow, president of the St. Catharines CYO Minor Hockey, said his association would split the money toward its Just Try It program that provides equipment, ice time and certified instructors to kids who haven't experienced playing the game before, such as new Canadians.

The three hockey associations and Kiwanis teamed up for a food challenge during the festival that raised more than 2,250 kilograms of donations for Community Care of St. Catharines and Thorold.

karena.walter@sunmedia.ca



KARENA WALTER/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Rogers Hometown Hockey came to downtown St. Catharines Saturday with activities for all ages, including puck shooting practice, a ball hockey rink, air hockey and bubble hockey tables, a warming lodge with hot chocolate, live entertainment and NHL alumni.

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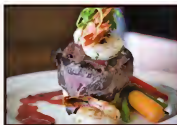
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**■ I'VE BEEN THINKING**

# I've been thinking about Christmas carols

REV. DR. STEVEN DAVID  
 Central United Church, Port Colborne

I sat down a few days ago and spent several hours trying to come up with a rotation of Christmas carols to be used in our church services this year.

As I knew would happen (because it always happens) I ended up in a discussion about whether or not we should even be singing Christmas carols during Advent.

For those of you in churches that don't follow the liturgical year, Advent is the four weeks of preparation before Christmas Day, and some folks are very adamant that Christmas carols not be used during Advent. Something about the church giving in to the Christmas excesses that start so early now (I've seen artificial Christmas trees on the shelves in August). Maybe there's something to be said for that. When one of our local

radio stations announced that it was playing Christmas music "24/7" (before November was even over) I did sigh a bit — and within a couple of weeks I was getting increasingly tired of *Feliz Navidad*. It's a wonderful song — the first 25 times you hear it within a couple of weeks.

But, even if I might be accused of contributing to the Christmas excesses, I still use Christmas carols during Advent — not to buy into the secular Christmas excess, and not just because I like many of them, but because I think there's some very important theology contained in Christmas carols.

If I see a problem in many corners of the church these days it's that even Christians have a very poor understanding of the importance of the incarnation. The incarnation refers to the belief that in the life of Jesus, God became flesh and experienced human life, with all its joys and all its sorrows. To me,

incarnation is central to Christianity. It is the ultimate sign of divine love — that the God who created the universe would love what he created so much that he would choose to become a part of it. That, to me, is love. Incarnation speaks of love. Incarnation is vital, as far as I'm concerned.

But lots of people don't get it. And it seems to me that Christmas carols are a potential part of the solution.

Over the years I've learned that many people get their basic theological ideas from the songs that they sing or that they've heard. Songs tend to stick in our memories. They influence how we think or how we feel. Some songs can bring tears to people's eyes because they touch our emotions. Some songs can make us think because they challenge us. Christmas carols it seems to me have the opportunity to do both. They remind us of happy times in the past and they help usher us

into a season of good cheer, but they also confront us with the reality of incarnation.

Christmas carols are the only songs we have in the church that really speak passionately and overtly about the divine incarnation in Jesus. If, as a church, we choose to restrict their use to a two- or three-week period during the year then it seems to me that we should hardly be surprised when increasing numbers of Christians doubt the incarnation or at least doubt its importance.

If the songs of incarnation aren't important enough for the church to sing outside the narrow window of Dec. 24 to Jan. 6, then what is the church saying about the importance of the message they contain?

And, in any event, would God really disapprove of singing Christmas carols during Advent? I don't think so. Which is why I spent that time working out a rotation of carols for several services and not just a couple.

## Shipwrecks — Fire Chief

SKIPP GILLHAM  
 For QMI Agency Niagara

The tug *Fire Chief* was aptly named and, for a number of years, was based at Montreal to fight fires both on land and aboard ship.

The tug originally served in that capacity at Cleveland under the name *John H. Farley*.

The 27.43-metre-long vessel was completed early in 1894 but on May 9, 1894, it sank at Cleveland and had to be refloated and repaired. The ship then served much more successfully before being sold in

1938 and brought into Canadian registry. Renamed *Fire Chief*, the vessel headed through the Welland Canal for new service at Montreal.

*Fire Chief* worked both as a towing tug as well as in fire fighting duties. However, on Sept. 13, 1968, the tug capsized again and sank at its dock in Windmill Basin, Montreal. While refloated, the ship remained idle until being sold for scrap later in the year.

*Fire Chief* was towed to Kingston in December 1968 and then taken to Hamilton in July 1969 where the hull was broken up by United Metals.



DAVE FREEMAN/COURTESY RENE BEAUCHAMP

The tugboat *Fire Chief* is pictured in Montreal on Oct. 17, 1965.



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■ **QUEEN'S PARK:** Omnibus bill drives Niagara's New Democrats to vote against Bill 8

# NDP defends rejection of Transparency Act

GREG FURMINGER  
QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara's New Democrat MPPs are defending their decisions to vote against a new law requiring that Ontario's parliamentarians report all their political expenses to taxpayers online.

Both Welland's Cindy Forster and Niagara Falls' Wayne Gates chose not to support Bill 8, which passed in the legislature this month, putting into law a requirement also that the voting records of all MPPs be published.

Forster said she and her fellow NDPers are supportive of moves toward improved fiscal transparency, including that expenses for out-of-riding travel, hotel accommoda-

tion related to that travel, meals and hospitality for all three party leaders, their respective staff and all 107 MPPs be posted on the web.

"Of course we are, they're public dollars," Forster said.

But what she and her colleagues could not support were other components of the omnibus bill. Containing 11 pieces of legislation, she said it was debated in less than four hours.

Some of those pieces, she said, didn't go far enough, which is why she voted against the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act.

"I think people in Ontario won't be fooled by its title," Gates, also condemning it for what he called "flaws," said.

"It's not a transparency bill, it's a Stephen Harper-style omnibus bill," he said. "They throw everything but the kitchen sink in this bill then they say, 'Hey, look, they're not supportive of transparency.'"

While the act also extends the role of Ontario's ombudsman to include responsibilities over municipalities, school boards and publicly funded universities, it does not give the ombudsman the same responsibilities over health care. Instead, the act will establish a patient ombudsman to respond to complaints about public hospitals, long-term care homes and community care access centres — but, said Forster, with far less powers, and not over such places as medical clinics and other "areas that

health-care is moving."

While the act gives the provincial accountability for children and youth new powers to investigate children's aid societies, Forster and Gates both said they were not supportive of that part of Bill 8 because it, too, came up short, failing to address other places for at-risk children, including juvenile detention centres and mental health facilities.

And, Forster said, while the act gives the provincial government the ability to implement caps on compensation of executives in such public service organizations as the LCBO, OLG, Ornge and eHealth, it does not establish caps.

Forster said the majority government got what it wanted by pushing through with a broad bill.

Her decision not to support Bill 8 based on what she considered big shortcomings prompted a news release to be issued by the Liberals, in which Treasury Board president Deb Matthews, MPP for London-North Centre, took direct aim at both of Niagara's NDP members.

"(The) vote by Wayne Gates and Cindy Forster against increased accountability is inexplicable," Matthews said in the release. "The NDP talks the talk on accountability, but they certainly don't walk the walk."

Forster threw barbs back at Liberals, saying "they should take a shot at themselves after the auditor general's report" released the same day, showed among several things that the province's debt will hit \$325 bil-

lion at a rate faster than the economy is growing, that Ontario's pension plans are underfunded, that the \$1.9-billion Smart Meter rollout has yet to justify its cost to hydro customers, and that there's no co-ordinated system in place to deliver palliative care services to the dying.

Auditor general Bonnie Lysyk also concluded Ontario is spending \$8 billion more than needed on 74 public-private infrastructure projects.

Said Gates of the Liberals upon the release of Lysyk's damning report: "Where's their credibility at all?"

"I'll put my transparency and accountability up against anybody," he said.

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# LOCAL NEWS

## HOLIDAY WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICES



### HOLIDAY CHANGES IN WASTE COLLECTION

Garbage, recycling and Green Bin collection will be deferred by one day in the week following Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Regular Waste Collection Day	Changed to:
Monday, Dec. 22	No change
Tuesday, Dec. 23	No change
Wednesday, Dec. 24	No change
Thursday, Dec. 25	Friday, Dec. 26
Friday, Dec. 26	Saturday, Dec. 27
Monday, Dec. 29	No Change
Tuesday, Dec. 30	No Change
Wednesday, Dec. 31	No Change
Thursday, Jan. 1	Friday, Jan. 2
Friday, Jan. 2	Saturday, Jan. 3



### HOLIDAY GARBAGE EXEMPTIONS

In the week following Christmas (Dec. 26, 27, 29, 30, 31), households may place double their regular weekly garbage limit to the curb on their collection day.



### CHRISTMAS TREE COLLECTION

- Saturday, Jan. 10, 2015 ONLY
- Christmas trees must be at the curb by 7 a.m.
- Remove all ornaments and decorations
- Christmas trees wrapped in plastic or buried in snow will not be collected. No artificial trees.

Niagara Region

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## ■ POLICE

# New radio system way overdue: police association

BILL SAWCHUK  
QMI Agency Niagara

A new radio system for the Niagara Regional Police can't come soon enough, the head of the association representing rank-and-file officers says.

"It's one of the most important projects the service will undertake," says Niagara Region Police Association president Cliff Priest. "Without an effective radio system, we cannot provide good policing for the community. It is way overdue."

Niagara Region has approved \$16 million for the new voice radio system, said police board chair Henry D'Angela.

The contract was awarded to Motorola Canada Inc. in August.

The NRP brass was in Chicago last week "kicking the tires" of the new system, Deputy Chief Joe Matthews said.

"We've had a chance to do the testing on the system right on the floor at the Motorola shop," Matthews said. "We are doing our best to co-ordinate it with a number of other projects — the most important being the headquarters project."

Matthews said the new system is probably about a year away from being fully operational in vehicles.

"It will be set up in stages and over the next several months," he said. "The testing in the field will continue into the spring and the summer. We hope to be operational at the time next year."

The NRP's current Motorola radio system is antiquated and needs to be replaced. Motorola has told the police that support service for the network infrastructure will

end in 2015.

"This is something we desperately need," Priest said. "We had to take the service to the Ministry of Labour because of the constant breakdown in the radio system. It was jeopardizing our ability to respond to the public."

"We do not have a say in the new system, but as long as it meets the requirements, we are happy."

The new radio system, known as a P25 voice radio communication system, operates in a new 700-megahertz frequency band reserved for police and public safety and has additional capacity for future growth.

"With that we are getting a state-of-the-art system that will give us the opportunity to partner with other agencies," Matthews said. "We are hoping some of the other public safety agencies will come onto the system and the system has the capacity to support that."

The new system is also expected to provide the NRP with improved coverage, something which has been a problem.

"The Niagara region's geography — with the escarpment and the mix of urban and rural areas — creates some challenges, but there are guarantees from Motorola that we will get the coverage we need so our officers are in touch," Matthews said.

The system also has GPS-enabled equipment that allows dispatchers to know exactly where front-line officers are at critical times. "That's the ultimate safety tool," Matthews said.

Bill Sawchuk@summedia.ca  
Twitter: Bill\_Standard

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## ■ DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF NIAGARA

# Math, special ed key for board chair

**DON FRASER**  
QMI Agency Niagara

For Sue Barnett, it all adds up to one formula for student success: key in on mathematics and push up those scores at District School Board of Niagara.

Although they have improved over the years, the board's recent results from the province's standardized math test have fallen short of expectations.

Last September, applied and academic math results for Grade 9s were three and four percentage points below the provincial standard, respec-

tively. Grade 6 results also slipped this year.

"Improving student achievement (overall) is top of my mind," said Barnett.

"And math is really a priority with the board."

The Welland trustee was recently elected to be DSBN's new chair, replacing Kevin Maves.

On the math front, she spoke of efforts underway. That includes the Dreambox online math program that lets parents access help to assist their children with math.

Money in its approximately \$240-million annual budget has also been set aside for

numeracy-update training for teachers.

"It's made a huge difference," said Barnett, 64.

"Even teachers that don't specialize in math say they find it extremely helpful."

Boosting special education also has a place in her heart.

For years, the board complained its proportionate funding for these programs was unfair compared to what other Ontario boards receive.

That has only recently started being rectified, with additional funding from the Ministry of Education.

"We'll continue to ... try to

get the government to revise its funding formula," she said.

"Special needs programming should just be there, it should be automatic for everyone to use who needs it."

Barnett said ongoing supports for students in areas like mental health also need to continue.

"Let's put staff in place to make education easier, more accessible, with bigger supports to our staff so they can teach and help."

In this vein, sensible budgeting is also key for trustees, she said.

"Let's be wise with the use of our money," Barnett said,

adding that includes looking for outside sources of income such as DSBN's international student program.

The Welland is a retired lab technician and a grandmother of six.

The chair, first elected trustee four years ago, said accommodation reviews of schools with dwindling enrolment are a painful necessity and part of being fiscally responsible.

"We don't get funded for our use of empty seats," she said. "And it costs us, as you still have to pay all the staff and the bills."

"It is not easy for any community, but you cannot fund a

half-empty school."

Barnett said it's unfair for "other students you're taking money away from" and to the staff working there.

"I will (especially) never, ever vote in favour of triple splits," she said, referring to three grades taught by a teacher in one class. "It's unfair to the children and staff ... how can you learn like that?"

Barnett said board partnerships with municipalities and other public bodies should continue.

Her ideal DSBN: "More transparency, back-and-forth dialogue — what's good for communities, but also what's good for students."

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Enbridge Gas Distribution Inc. has applied to the Ontario Energy Board to increase its natural gas rates effective January 1, 2015. Under the proposal, an average residential customer of Enbridge Gas would see an increase of \$11 to the annual bill. Other customers, including businesses, may also be affected.

The requested rate increase is based on the rate update framework approved by the Board for the period 2014 to 2018. The rate change is tied to updated costs for 2015 which include measures to promote efficiency.

### THE ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD WILL HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING

The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) will hold a public hearing to consider Enbridge's request. We will question the company on its case for a rate change. We will also hear arguments from individuals and from groups that represent Enbridge Gas customers. At the end of this hearing, the OEB will decide what, if any, rate changes will be allowed.

The OEB is an independent and impartial public agency. We make decisions that serve the public interest. Our goal is to promote a financially viable and efficient energy sector that provides you with reliable energy services at a reasonable cost.

### BE INFORMED AND HAVE YOUR SAY

You have the right to information regarding this application and to be involved in the process. You can:

- review Enbridge Gas Distribution Inc.'s application on the OEB's website now.
- file a letter with your comments, which will be considered during the hearing.
- become an active participant (called an intervenor). Apply by **December 30, 2014** or the hearing will go ahead without you and you will not receive any further notice of the proceeding.
- at the end of the process, review the OEB's decision and its reasons on our website.

### LEARN MORE

Our file number for this case is EB-2014-0276. To learn more about this hearing, find instructions on how to file letters, become an intervenor, or to access any document related to this case, please enter that file number at the OEB website: [www.ontarioenergyboard.ca/notice](http://www.ontarioenergyboard.ca/notice). You can also phone our Consumer Relations Centre at 1-877-632-2727 with any questions.

### ORAL VS. WRITTEN HEARINGS

There are two types of OEB hearings – oral and written. The OEB will determine at a later date whether to proceed by way of a written or oral hearing.

### PRIVACY

If you write a letter of comment, your name and the content of your letter will be put on the public record and the OEB website. However, your personal telephone number, home address and email address will be removed. If you are a business, all your information will remain public. If you apply to become an intervenor, all information will be public.

This rate hearing will be held under section 36 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, S.O. 1998 c. 15 (Schedule B).



Ontario Energy Board  
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et du gaz

### ■ NCDSB

## New chair MacNeil seeks openness, best practices

**DON FRASER**  
QMI Agency Niagara

Top of mind for Rev. Paul MacNeil at Niagara Catholic District School Board: Fiscal prudence and educational excellence.

MacNeil, a pastor with St. Ann's Parish in Fenwick, is the new chair for the Catholic board.

The 49-year-old was the role, replacing former chair Kathy Burmick.



REV. PAUL  
MACNEIL

"It's a little overwhelming," he said with a laugh. "But I'll see what I can do."

In October, he was also acclaimed as board trustee representing Grimsby, Lincoln, West Lincoln and Pelham.

"I want to work closely with trustees to have a really good discussion and come together," MacNeil said. "We're all on the same page about education and Catholic education."

Those discussions need to be open and honest, he added.

MacNeil said a key part of good education is solidifying "the relationship between teacher and student." He describes asking one teacher what she wanted from the board.

Her response was straightforward. "She said 'I just want to be in front of the classroom and teach,'" he said. "I sense that devotion and dedication, and want to capitalize on that — that is what will be best for our kids."

"I also want to be the best employee in Ontario for which to work for."

Last year, the Niagara Catholic board struggled with a deficit and had to dip into its accumulated surplus reserve to keep its finances balanced.

MacNeil said that is a situation that will have to be dealt with.

"It doesn't mean we don't have a problem ... we're keeping our eye on it and have to be very careful," he said. "Right now, we have a slight deficit (but it's within) the ministry allowance."

"Definitely, we will have to take a close look at how we manage that, moving forward," he said.

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Twitter: @don\_standard



## ■ NIAGARA REGION

# Caslin vows change at chair

**ROB HOULE**  
(QMI Agency Niagara)

Niagara Region's new chair is looking to shake things up.

"I will launch a review of all services and programs delivered by the region," Al Caslin said prior to a vote on the chairmanship last Thursday morning. He repeated the pledge later in his inaugural address to council.

"We will keep those that are working, discontinue or modernize those that are no longer achieving the desired results. This exercise will involve a line-by-line review of the budget to ensure the taxpayers are getting good value for the money."

His win was a rejection of the old guard.

Caslin, who was reelected to a second term as a regional councillor for St. Catharines in October, is a virtual political neophyte compared to the political pedigrees of the other candidates for chair.

The secret ballot election among the 30 regional councillors required a simple majority of 16 votes for a win. In what might be considered a surprise by many, Caslin won on a single ballot, garnering 18 votes. He easily outdistanced a trio of former mayors — incumbent Gary Burroughs of Niagara-on-the-Lake (seven votes), Bill Hodgson of Lincoln (three votes) and Henry D'Angela of Thorold (two votes).

The 54-year-old Caslin said the strength of his backing bodes well for the new council.

"It's always great to have that kind of support, and I'm comforted with the fact I have that kind of support around the horseshoe," he said.

"I think it will make for a solid council and solid decisions in the upcoming four-year term."

The vote for chair came soon after the new council was sworn in and nominations were put forth and seconded.

Hodgson was nominated by St. Catharines Council, Brian Heit and Lincoln Mayor Sandra Easton. Caslin was nominated by Selma Volpatti of Niagara Falls and Wainfleet Mayor April Jeffs.

Burroughs was nominated by rookie St. Catharines Coun. Debbie MacGregor and West Lincoln Mayor Doug Joyner, while D'Angela was nominated by Thorold Mayor Ted Luciani and Heit.

Each of the candidates was then given five minutes to sway their council cohorts.

Caslin touted his leadership experience, noting he was the only candidate with 20 years' manufacturing experience "with a global organization" and before that owned and operated a real estate business.

"I understand the needs of small business and what it takes to be successful."

He said his master's degree in operations management will come in handy.

"Organizational effectiveness is one of my strengths. I rely on a balanced approach to setting clear expectations, developing and executing a plan and measuring those results."

Speaking prior to the vote, Caslin said if elected chair his first order of business would "be to look inward, to ensure our organization is operating as efficiently as possible."

He said he would push for the continued waiving of industrial development charges for new businesses and continue to press the Ontario government for regular daily GO rail service to Niagara.

Caslin was the last of the candidates to make his intentions known. He did not publicly declare he was seeking the chair position until two days earlier.

Another candidate, Bruce Timms, announced in an e-mail to fellow regional councillors last Wednesday he was stepping out of the race and throwing his support to Caslin.

Timms, Burroughs, D'Angela and Hodgson had taken part in a debate of candidates organized by eight Niagara chambers of commerce.

Caslin said that although he had been considering a bid for chair since being re-elected Oct. 27, he was still mulling his decision at the time of the debate. In any case, he said, he had a prior commitment that night and would not have been able to participate.

A General Motors employee for 20 years, most recently as facilities manager, Caslin said he was uncertain of his future with the automaker.

"There's lots to be discussed yet. This is new for me, so I'm going to have to take some time to have my discussions with GM," he said.

Caslin said he does not see a council divided along political party lines.

"I definitely do not. My supporters are from all stripes of political background."

In his inaugural address to council late last Thursday afternoon, Caslin repeated the themes of his earlier speech

and thanked councillors for putting their trust in him.

"I intend to repay that trust with accountability and effective leadership," he said. "As your regional chair, I pledge to you an open door and an open mind that will not let partisan thinking stand in the way of a good idea or the right thing to do. With strong leadership and honest partnership, we will move Niagara Region forward."

Caslin said he would seek input from all councillors.

"This consultation will begin immediately. We will need to set aside our differences and come together to benefit those

who sent us here."

Meanwhile, Caslin moving up to the chair position opens a spot for another regional councillor from St. Catharines. The region will leave the decision on how to fill the city's seventh regional council seat up to the City of St. Catharines, which in the past has opted to fill the position with the person who finished eight.

That was Kelley Edgar, who said last Thursday afternoon he is willing.

"As far as I'm concerned, I can't wait to get up there and get to work," Edgar said.

rob.houle@sunmedia.ca

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# LOCAL NEWS

## ■ NIAGARA REGION



**BOB THOMPSON /**  
QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Former Regional Chair Gary Burroughs speaks says he is disappointed but not surprised that he wasn't returned to the position of chair. He was defeated on the first ballot by Al Caslin of St. Catharines 18 to seven.

## Burroughs disappointed but not surprised

**BOB HOULE**  
QMI Agency Niagara

He made history, although not in the

fashion he would like.

Gary Burroughs became the first Niagara Region chair seeking re-election to not regain the job.

He lost out last Thursday by a wide margin in a first-ballot vote as the first order of business for the region's new council. Burroughs finished second to Al Caslin of St. Catharines, 18 votes to seven.

Burroughs, who left chambers quickly at the conclusion of the meeting, said he was disappointed to lose, although not surprised.

He said he did not see the loss as a personal reflection on his leadership. "I'm looking on it as a change in the way politics happens at our little local level, and no more than that," Burroughs said. "It used to be 30 people just making a decision, without a lot of pre-work done."

"So I don't take it personally. I actually wouldn't do anything in the last four years any differently than I did. I feel good about what has been accomplished."

Asked if he thought partisan politics came into play, Burroughs was non-committal.

"That will be up to the people who voted for Mr. Caslin — I don't even want to go there."

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# LOCAL NEWS

## BUSINESS

# Good year for seaway shipping

DON FRASER  
QMI Agency Niagara

St. Lawrence Seaway cargo shipments for this year are expected to top 2013's totals, powered by a surge in grain exports and steel imports.

St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp. reported its total shipments reached 34.6 million tonnes from March 25 to Nov. 30.

That's up 5% over the same period last year and it's anticipated the shipping season will surpass last year's by a similar margin.

Seaway market development director Bruce Hodgson said a brutal winter meant the loss of about four weeks of shipping due to ice conditions.

"But then we rebounded, with grain continuing to be strong. And we expect it should remain strong until the end of the season," he said.

Hodgson said the grain crop last year was a record one, with a "huge amount of carryover that was left in the system."

"And it was decent quality ... so once we got rid of the ice, we had a very strong start."

Grain shipments in Canada and the U.S. to Nov. 30 were at 10.1 million tonnes, up 44% over 2013. That's the most Canadian grain shipped through the seaway for that period in 13 years.

Exports of grain through ports like Hamilton and Port Colborne are also up significantly this fall.

Meanwhile, boosted activity in construction and automotive manufacturing in Canada and the U.S. pushed up steel shipments by 80% this season to 2.2 million tonnes.

"Steel has been strong," said Hodgson. "The U.S. economy has shown good signs of recovery and a big part of what's driving our iron and steel is the auto sector, which continues to be strong."

The seaway says nearly two million tonnes of new business also helped offset decreases that otherwise took place in iron ore and coal shipments this year.

"This certainly (positively) impacts our tolls and revenue," Hodgson said. "And we



BOB THYRCZYNSKI/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

The ship Resko makes it's way through the Welland Canal at Lock 3 in St. Catharines at the end of October. The Seaway expects more cargo to move in 2014 than in 2013.

are seeing next year continue to be strong for the iron and steel business."

The St. Lawrence Seaway is

slated to close on New Year's Eve at 4 p.m. and is expected to reopen sometime in mid to late March. Last year's close

took place Jan. 1 at 2 p.m.

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■ **SAFETY:** Ensure there is carbon monoxide detector in the house

# Silent killer in the home

ALISON LANGLEY  
QMI Agency Niagara

When his carbon monoxide detector began to beep, little did he know he was being exposed to a potentially-deadly gas.

"It kept beeping and beeping and I took the batteries out to stop it," said Bert Schertzing, of Niagara Falls.

Fifteen minutes later, a second detector began to beep. A half-hour later, a third device sounded an

alarm.

Although he didn't feel ill, Schertzing decided he better have it checked out and called Niagara Falls Fire Department.

Firefighters determined there were high levels of carbon monoxide in the home.

The odorless, tasteless toxic gas is virtually undetectable in a home. It kills about 50 Canadians, including 11 Ontarians, every year.

"It's called the silent killer because you don't know you're being exposed to danger," said Ben Trendle, captain of fire prevention.

If the alarm goes off, he said, odds are there's a problem and needs to be checked out.

"Don't be complacent," he said. "Get everyone out of the house, keep the doors and windows closed, and call 911 from a safe location."

The fire department recommends residents don't open the windows and doors because it could result in an inaccurate reading when emergency services personnel arrive to assess the situation.

Last Monday's incident came only four days after Niagara Emergency Medical Services were called to another Niagara Falls home in response to a 911 call

about a woman suffering from a medical emergency.

Within 40 seconds of paramedics entering the home, the portable carbon monoxide alarms they carry registered high levels of the dangerous gas.

Paramedics evacuated the home and of the seven occupants inside, five were taken to hospital.

As a result of the high level of carbon monoxide, additional EMS resources and the fire department attended the scene.

"The carbon monoxide levels were very, very high," Trendle said.

"If this incident would have occurred during the night, when people were sleeping and at their most vulnerable, we definitely could have had tragic consequences."

Firefighters have portable carbon monoxide detectors

## FIRE PREVENTION

■ Install smoke alarms on every storey and outside sleeping areas.

■ Install carbon monoxide alarms. They are mandatory.

■ Blow out candles before leaving house.

■ Develop and practise a home escape plan.

■ Maintain wood stoves, fireplaces, chimneys.

■ Keep Christmas trees away from ignition sources.

■ Stay in the kitchen while cooking.

— Source Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management

makes the alarms mandatory in all residential homes.

Not having a working carbon monoxide alarm in a home can result in a fine of up to \$50,000.

The alarms are required near all sleeping areas in residential homes and in the service rooms and adjacent rooms of multi-residential units.

Fire officials are encouraging residents to check to make sure their carbon monoxide alarm is in working order.

"As you make your preparations for the holiday season, make sure you include fire safety as part of your list," said Ontario Fire Marshal Ted Wedelawek.

"Following simple tips, such as testing your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and practising your home escape plan, can help ensure you, your family and guests have a safe and happy holiday."

The top five causes of fires in December are from heating equipment, unattended cooking, electrical distribution equipment, cigarettes and appliances.

Last December, there were 64 injuries and 14 fatalities related to fires in the province.

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# LOCAL NEWS

■ **HEALTH:** Senior celebrates 97th birthday in aquafit class

## 'You have to keep moving'

**MARYANNE FIRTH**  
QMI Agency Niagara

Like many members at the Niagara Centre YMCA, Gilberte Fournier hops in the pool at least three times a week.

Aquafit is her workout of choice and she knows the moves better than most.

When the music gets underway, she shows no signs of slowing.

But there's one important factor that sets the Welland resident apart from others hitting the gym looking to stay fit.

On Nov. 25, Fournier turned 97.

Staff at the Welland facility held a celebration Tuesday to mark not only the retired educator's birthday, but also

her commitment to staying active.

She is not only the oldest member of the Rose City's YMCA, but also the oldest YMCA member in all of Niagara.

It just so happens it was a near-death experience that prompted Fournier to make the life-changing decision to join the Y in 1979.

Only weeks before, during a visit to Mexico, she slipped beneath the water and struggled to resurface.

Returning to Canada frightened but unscathed, she was determined to learn how to swim.

Fournier signed up for lessons at the former YMCA facility on East Main St. and never again shied away from

the pool.

"Then the day came when I couldn't swim anymore. I wasn't strong enough," she recalled.

But that did not discourage her.

She instead began taking aquafit classes, moving at her own pace and setting her own difficulty level.

Fournier relies on assistance from a cane when walking, but in the water her body is able to find an unmatched freedom.

"I can't stand for longer than two minutes sometimes, but in the pool it's different," she said.

"When I get out, I feel so good. That's why I come."

In the '70s, Fournier was recommended for knee

replacement surgery, but she declined and instead used the pool as a form of therapy.

"I never got the operation," she said with a laugh, while adding the weekly pool time, which she enjoys thanks to daughter-in-law Cynthia Fournier who drives her to classes, has been good for her joints.

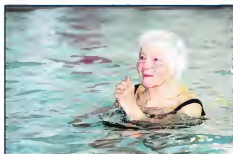
She admitted it's not always easy pushing herself to get out of the house and into the water.

"Sometimes I have to pinch myself to get out, but I do."

"I want to stay well," Fournier said.

"I don't want to stay in bed for years, so I do what I can."

Her advice, offered with



MARYANNE FIRTH/STAFF PHOTO

Gilberte Fournier, 97, participates in aquafit classes three times a week at the Niagara Centre YMCA in Welland. She is the oldest YMCA member in Niagara.

a cheeky smile: "Don't be lazy."

"You have to keep moving."

Cynthia believes it's a little luck, good genes and a positive attitude that has helped to keep Fournier so active as she nears 100.

YMCA centre manager Sally Jane Southern-Grice said it's hard when meeting

Fournier to believe she's 97. "She's so full of life," she said, while calling her an inspiration for members of all ages at the facility.

"Life goes by very fast," Fournier said.

"You might as well enjoy every day."

maryanne.firth@summedia.ca  
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## ■ RECREATIONAL CANAL



MARYANNE FIRTH / STAFF PHOTO

Welland International Flatwater Centre is getting new dragon boats thanks to an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant.

# Bring on the dragons

DAN DAKIN  
QMI Agency Niagara

There will be a whole lot of new dragons floating down the Welland Recreational Canal next year.

Welland Recreational Canal Corp. has been awarded a \$123,800 Ontario Trillium Foundation grant to buy nine new dragon boats for Welland International Flatwater Centre.

The boats will arrive in time for the 2015 Canadian National Dragon Boat Championships in June.

"Being such large boats, they're not something you can move around, so having that asset in Welland is a huge competitive advantage for us over other venues," said WRC executive director Stephen Fischer.

The boats will also be used during Dragon Boat Niagara 2015, a combination of the International Dragon Boat Federation World Championships and the Pan American Club Crew Dragon Boat Championships, which are expected to draw a combined 5,000 participants to the Welland waterway next summer. Another 2,000 athletes are expected to take part in the national championships in June.

The dragon boats being purchased are a mix of 20-person and 10-person international standard boats. In dragon boat racing, teams don't bring their own boats to competitions, but race in a boat provided to them.

Fischer said the new boats have a life span of about 20

years and will help attract more dragon boat races to Welland in the future.

"The hope is we will be able to solidify a long-term relationship with Dragon Boat Canada for hosting camps, clinics and national and international events," he said, referring to the sport's governing body in Canada.

Chloe Greenlough, executive director of the organization, said her organization is hoping for the same thing.

"It's pretty exciting for us because the course in Welland is arguably the best in Canada and one of the best in the world," she said. "It's a great flatwater centre for sprinters for traditional sports, but unlike many centres, it suits us perfectly, as well."

Greenlough said there are now 85,000 dragon boaters in Canada.

"We grow every year," she said. "To have a community making such an investment in making this a go-to place for dragon boating, and to have us be a part of that is super exciting."

The boats will also be made available for local events, such as the Welland Dragon Boat Festival.

Part of the grant money will also be used to buy permanent, outdoor storage containers to keep the boats on-site at WRC.

"The biggest thing is what we can do long term (with the grant)," Fischer said. "We can become a home for dragon boat racing."

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# Biodiesel plant's future uncertain

DAN DAKIN  
QMI Agency

A \$50-million Welland biodiesel plant heralded as the future of the clean fuel industry has gone into receivership and will be sold to the highest bidder.

Court documents confirm Toronto-based KPMG has been appointed as the receiver for Great Lakes Biodiesel (GLB), along with associated companies Elmer Canada and Bioversel Trading.

It's the latest chapter in the rocky history of Great Lakes Biodiesel, which opened a production facility on St. Clair Dr. in Welland's Dain City at the end of 2012 to convert canola and soybean oil into biodiesel fuel.

The receivership is the result of court action by Luxembourg-based investment company Heridige SARL, which said in court it was only repaid half of a \$20-million loan used to get GLB's Welland plant off the ground.

Heridige has now submitted a bid to purchase all assets of GLB, including the Welland plant that still employs 16 people.

The plant is not currently in operation, according to court documents. It is being maintained, though, so it can immediately go back into production once more feedstock used to make biodiesel can be purchased to get things rolling when a new owner arrives.

"The plant itself, accord-

ing to the folks I've spoken to across the industry, is state-of-the-art and is a very valuable asset," said Welland MP Malcolm Allen.

"I'm hopeful someone else will step up to the plate and take it over. That seems very likely."

A judge at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice appointed KPMG as the receiver in early October. A former director of GLB and its associated companies argued in court the \$20-million loan was directed to a third party and never given to GLB directly.

Justice Laurence Patillo disagreed, and the receivership moved forward, court documents show.

According to the documents, when GLB both to build the Welland production facility in 2012 and to secure a commitment from the federal government for \$65 million in funding through Natural Resources Canada's \$1.5-billion ecoENERGY fund, designed to kickstart the country's biofuel industry.

A representative from St. Catharines MP Rick Dykstra's office confirmed GLB was initially approved for the funding at the end of 2011, but was never given any of the money.

E-mails from Natural Resources Canada to GLB officials, presented in court during receivership proceedings, are now part of the court files. They show Natural Resources Canada termi-

nated its \$65-million ecoENERGY agreement in October 2013, on the basis "GLB had failed to fully commission the biodiesel plant in accordance with the requisite time lines."

The court documents show company officials appealed earlier this year and Natural Resources Canada reopened the talks with GLB, but suspended them again in July as a result of a criminal investigation related to Customs Act violations involving Bioversel Trading.

That investigation, being handled by Canada Border Services Agency, remains open and before the courts, CBSA Quebec regional office spokesman Dominique McNeely confirmed Thursday.

The CBSA raided the Toronto offices of Bioversel in May, 2013 during an investigation into shipments of biodiesel from Quebec City to Europe in 2009 and 2011.

"There is nothing public we can say about this case at this time," McNeely said.

Allen said he believed GLB might have been relying on the funding to make its business model work.

"Entering the market without being able to support yourself by other means, biodiesel is a difficult enterprise to get yourself established here. It looks like the (business model) they chose was less effective than others and they got themselves into a difficult spot."

A former employee spoke to QMI Agency *Welland* on the condition of anonymity because he had signed a non-disclosure agreement when he was hired, and subsequently let go by the company.

He said not getting the federal funding was a major blow.

"Once the government pulled their funding, it made it iffy," he said. "Since Day 1, it was a lack of money. Once I heard they weren't going to get funding from the government, I started looking for a job."

On Monday, the court accepted an opening bid from Heridige for three parts of GLB's assets: the Welland plant and the 16-acre piece of land it's built on, the equipment and inventory, and all remaining assets.

All bids for the assets must be made to KPMG by Jan. 7. If additional bids come in, the assets will be sold in an auction. If no other qualified bids are received, Heridige will take over ownership.

A Heridige spokesperson, who asked not to be identified, said Saturday the company wants to keep the plant running.

"Once they own it, they would be working very hard to see the plant come into production. It would be a great outcome for them and for the community," the person said.

"With 170 million litres, it's one of the largest plants in Canada, but it's very hard to judge the potential at this

## GREAT LAKES BIODIESEL

### By the Numbers

170 million – biodiesel production capacity, in litres of Welland plant  
8.5 million – storage capacity on-site, in litres  
16 – acres the plant is built on

17 – number of employees currently working on site  
17600 – square footage of production and office space

65 million – amount of money originally committed to GLB by the federal government

0 – amount of money given to GLB from the federal government

stage because of the subsidy issue. The biodiesel market is difficult."

Former Welland city councillor Paul Grier, whose marketing company is on the list of creditors to whom GLB owes money because of his role as the head of a biodiesel association involving GLB, said the plant's technology and location next to a rail line will make it appealing to buyers.

"Anybody buying that plant could be up to speed in a couple of months. It's in good shape, and there are people there keeping it going," he said.

Grier said a major challenge facing biodiesel pro-

ducers in Ontario is that the provincial government only requires 0.6% of most diesel to be made up of biodiesel. In most other provinces, 2% is required.

He said the demand should go up when the mixture requirement goes up at the end of 2015.

At the GLB plant in Welland recently, numerous employees could still be seen entering the building and about a dozen cars were in the large gravel driveway.

An employee at the front desk advised a reporter seeking comment to contact KPMG.

Reached by phone at the Welland facility, the plant manager also said he couldn't comment and suggested contacting KPMG.

Clifton Prophet, who is listed as one of the two lawyers from the Toronto-based law firm representing GLB, said comments should be directed to KPMG.

The KPMG contact listed for the GLB file said all questions from the media should be directed to Phil Reynolds, the KPMG partner for restructuring and turnaround. Multiple calls and e-mails to Reynolds were not returned.

E-mails and phone calls requesting comment from former GLB officials named in the court documents were also not returned for this story.

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■ **POLITICS:** Building, operating track would be financed by group

# City seeks city land for BMX course

**RAY SPITERI**  
QMI Agency Niagara

A group wants to develop a BMX bicycle racing track on city-owned land.

And it wants that municipality to allocate land for the project.

Jim Jervis, a representative from the Niagara Falls BMX Association, spoke to councillors this month about building a track in the Mew-hurn Rd. recreational area.

The association says it would cost an estimated \$15,500 to construct a public-use facility, \$4,900 to conduct sanctioned races and \$37,800 to be capable of hosting provincial and national calibre events.

Jervis said the group will seek government grants to pay for expenses, but is only requesting a donation of land from the city.

"Once the track is operating with a complement of members, the annual membership fees and fundraising events will provide sufficient funding to maintain the track. The club and track will be financially self-sustaining, and will not require any ongoing funding from the city of Niagara Falls for future years," reads the proposal document that went before council.

The group says Niagara Falls is an ideal spot for a BMX track because it is central to the region and provides easy access for visitors. It would be the only track within 100 kilometres of Niagara Falls and has a potential of 29,000 participants under the age of 19 from within Niagara.

"With this strong demographic and being embedded in the community, we believe that a BMX track will be highly successful with kids of all ages," reads the proposal.

The non-profit association said it would like to construct the track in the spring with the first race in June. It would develop, build in conjunction with BMX Canada, manage and operate the track.

The proposal has been referred to staff to come back with a report.

Mayor Jim DiDiodi said he thinks the proposal is "great," especially since it doesn't involve ATVs, dirt bikes, motorcycles or other motorized vehicles.

Coun. Wayne Thomson said the property is controlled by Niagara Escarpment Commission and was acquired by the city about 20 years ago.

"I think that you should be commented for this proposal. This piece of property is very valuable. It couldn't be utilized for anything else."

"It's an excellent use."

Coun. Mike Strange told the association "it would be pretty

amazing if we could get this down here," adding it would promote health and fitness, especially among youth.

Coun. Wayne Campbell asked staff how likely it would be for the escarpment commission to support the proposal.

Staff said that, as well as liability issues, will be part of a report.

According to the proposal, the track would be open free to the public during daylight hours, with the exception of organized and sanctioned club events.

The track would operate organized events twice weekly, including one race event and one practice.

There may also be some larger events on weekends that would attract families and riders from across Ontario, Quebec and the United States, increasing revenues for local businesses.

The track would be sanctioned and insured by BMX Canada.

The association said it wants to reach as many young people as possible and grow the sport in Niagara. There is no other organized sport

where people of all ages can compete at the same event on the same track.

"Riders compete not only by age but also by proficiency," the proposal states. "This allows participants to race others who are of similar age and skill level."

The group said the Ottawa BMX Association has members ranging in age from 1 1/2 to 60.

The sport has grown since BMX racing became an official Olympic event in 2008. It will be showcased at the 2015 Pan Am Games in

Toronto and in the 2016 Summer Olympics in Brazil.

"The sport is nonpolluting, builds health, co-ordination and character," the report states. "It can be as competitive or noncompetitive as the individual wants to make it. It is an individual (as opposed to team) sport that offers many lessons which can be applied directly to adult life in our competitive society."

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# LOCAL NEWS

■ **COMPETITION:** Only Canadian site in international race that could see 100,000 runners

## Red Bull releases Niagara Falls run map

DAN DAKIN  
QMI Agency Niagara

The Niagara Falls edition of the Wings for Life World Run is shaping up to be an international

event. The second-ever Red Bull-backed World Run will be held

simultaneously in more than 35 locations around the world May 3, 2015, including the only Canadian site in Niagara Falls.

The unique event will see tens of thousands of runners competing against each other at all the international locations.

They'll all start at the exact same time, at 7 a.m. EDT and will try to outrun catcher cars, which will take off from the start line 30 minutes after the runners.

The cars will all travel at exactly 15 km/h. At set intervals, all the catcher cars around the globe will increase their speed until the overall men's and women's winners are declared.

More than 35,000 runners competed around the world in 2014, with the top male covering 78.6 kilometres and the top female covering 54.8 kilometres before being caught.

The top Canadian man and woman covered 46.7 kilometres and 33 kilometres respectively.

After approximately 200 people took part in the inaugural Canadian event in Saskatoon, Sask. last year, Red Bull estimates 1,500 will take part in the Niagara Falls race and as many as 100,000 worldwide.

Organizers said Monday registration for the local event is well ahead of 2014. So far, runners from Canada, the U.S., Trinidad, Taiwan, Ireland and Turkey have signed up.

The event is a fundraiser for the Wings for Life spinal cord injury research foundation. Entry fees are \$40 until Jan. 1, when they go up to \$50. All of that money will be donated directly to the foundation.

As for the route, because there's no way to know how much distance runners in each location will cover, organiz-

## RED BULL WINGS FOR LIFE WORLD RUN

May 3, 2015

### BY THE NUMBERS

- 100,000 – The expected field around the world
- 1,500 – Expected field in Niagara Falls
- 40 – Race venues on six continents
- 4.1 – Millions of dollars raised in 2014
- 100 – Route distance in kilometres planned for Niagara Falls

ers must design routes that cover 100 kilometres and are as flat as possible.

In Niagara Falls, the race will start in front of the Horseshoe Falls and then go south along the Niagara River Parkway all the way to Netherby Rd., which marks the 20 kilometre point.

From there, it heads toward Welland on Netherby before going north again into rural Niagara Falls. The route goes back south to Netherby, then heads north again just past 35 kilometres, where it turns north on Moyer Rd. and eventually east on Chippawa Creek Rd.

Should anyone make it past the 70 kilometre mark, the route heads past Niagara Square and into the heart of Niagara Falls.

Canadian winners will get free trips to any of the 2016 Wings for Life World Run locations. To register, visit [www.wingsforlifeworldrun.com](http://www.wingsforlifeworldrun.com).

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JOHN EWEY / SPECIAL TO QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Ryan King of Canada competes during the Wings for Life World Run in Saskatoon, Canada on May 4. Red Bull has announced the 2015 Canadian World Run race will be held in Niagara Falls on May 3.





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## IN BRIEF

## Tickets for Fiddler ready for stockings

People trying to find the perfect holiday present for lovers of live theatre

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Tickets are on sale for Port Colborne Operatic Society's upcoming production of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

The show hits the stage at Lakeshore Catholic High School's auditorium

Saturday, Feb. 14, with seven performances running until Sunday, March 1.

The Broadway favourite, which marks the operatic society's 70th annual musical production, is set in the small Russian village of Anatevka in the early 1900s.

It centres on Tevye, a poor dairyman, and his efforts to protect his five daughters and his traditions from a changing

world.

Reserved seats are \$20. Tickets can be purchased in advance at the Roselawn Centre box office, 295 Fielden Ave. or by phone at 905-834-7572.

For more information and a full list of show dates, visit [www.portcolborneoperaticsociety.com](http://www.portcolborneoperaticsociety.com). All proceeds above the operatic society's production costs benefit local charities.



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Many people have the idea that a colonoscopy is a painful experience. This should not be the case. The patient is most often well-sedated and unaware of the procedure unless they request to be awake. Likely, the most discomfort the patient will experience is during the day before the procedure, because they are required to consume an all-liquid diet and then take a laxative to clear out the bowel. One day of hunger and slight discomfort is surely worth having the procedure done properly!

There are some signs and symptoms to be aware of that may indicate there is a problem in the colon. These include blood in the stool or black-coloured stool, long-narrow shaped stools, abdominal cramping, or unexplained weight loss. If you are currently experiencing any of these symptoms or you notice these changes, don't delay talking to your doctor.

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## ■ REAL OR FAKE?

# 'You need the smell of a real tree'

ALISON LANGLEY  
 QMI Agency Niagara

It's a debate that's been raging for decades.

Some people enjoy the convenience of an artificial tree while others opt for the traditional real tree.

For Don Wallace and Dave Kilty, the answer is simple — nothing beats a real tree in the house for the holidays.

"It's not Christmas without a real tree," Kilty said.

"You need the smell of a real tree," Wallace added.

The two men are members of the Niagara Falls Lions Club on Drummond Rd. The service club has been selling Christmas trees to the public for more than 50 years.

This year, the club ordered more than 700 trees including Scotch pine, Fraser fir and balsams.

Generations of families have picked up a tree from the Lions over the years and Kilty said many take their time to find that perfect tree.

According to the Ministry of Natural Resources, approximately one million Christmas trees are harvested at more than 600 Ontario Christmas tree farms each year.

"Purchasing a real Christmas tree in Ontario is not only good for the environment, and Ontario's economy, it also brings families together and creates memories you will cherish forever," said Shirley Brennan, executive director of Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario.

Countrywide, the industry was valued at \$55.2 million in 2013.

That figure, according to Statistics Canada, represents a 1.6 per cent increase from \$52.1 million in 2012.

Canadian Christmas trees are exported across the world including to Japan, Barbados and the Netherlands.

On the flip side, the popularity of artificial trees is also on the rise.

In 2013, the total value of artificial trees imported to Canada was \$56.2 million, up from \$49.5 million the year before.

The majority of artificial trees are manufactured in China.

A recent poll commissioned by Forests Ontario revealed nearly half of respondents were planning to get a real tree this year.

## CHOOSING A TREE

The Lions Club offers the following tips:

- Cut one to two centimetres off the tree stump to eliminate the seal and to allow the tree to absorb water.
- Place the tree in a stand that can hold one gallon of water. Top up the water twice daily so the base of the tree never dries out.
- Use the smallest lights possible to prevent a build up of heat.
- Place the tree away from heat sources such as vents, fireplaces and sunny windows.

The Niagara-Hamilton area and central Ontario were most in favour of the environmental merits of real trees — more than 60 per cent of respondents in each region selected real trees as their choice this holiday season.

The Greater Toronto Area was the only region of the province that had a higher response in favour of artificial trees.

Real trees are also a far better choice for the environment, according to Forests Ontario, a nonprofit agency created in 2014 as a result of the merging Trees Ontario and the Ontario Forestry Association.

"Christmas tree farms play an important role in supporting healthy ecosystems and human health," said Rob Keen, CEO of Forests Ontario.

"These trees provide wildlife habitat protection for small birds and animals and to all of us, they're literally a breath of fresh air. They act as air pollution filters, soaking up carbon dioxide emitted by cars, planes and homes, turning it into oxygen."

A natural Christmas tree is 100 per cent recyclable and can be chipped and turned into a nutrient-rich mulch. Fake trees are made with polyvinyl chloride, a nonrenewable, petroleum-derived plastic. They will not break down in a landfill.

However, fake trees are reusable and can be kept for many years if handled and stored properly. They are also flame-retardant and easy to assemble.

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# LOCAL NEWS

■ **PETS:** Cats and dogs are part of the family

## Santa poses with his four-legged friends

GREG FURMINGER  
QMI Agency Niagara

Ho, ho, ho and woof, woof  
woof — pictures with Santa  
are going to the dogs.

And cats.

But really, the concept isn't  
new.

Wendy and Bart Evans have  
always taken their pets to have  
photos taken with the man in  
red.

"These are my kids," said  
Wendy as the two dogs she  
and Bart inherited two years  
ago were about to be photo-  
graphed at Seaway Mall,



adopted from the animal  
shelter. They're put on display  
during the holidays.

"I have one dog who opens  
all the Christmas gifts," Wendy  
says with a smile — lightheart-  
edly indicating that doesn't  
mean waiting until Christmas  
morning.

Her pets are part of her  
family.

"Look at how much is spent  
on treats and clothes," she  
notes.

Sylvia McCutcheon brought  
her three-year-old Yorkipoo  
Missy to the mall Saturday  
to have her first photo taken

with Santa.

"I think it's going to be  
cute," she said while express-  
ing appreciation some mon-  
eys would go to the humane  
society.

Waggin' Walks was also at  
the two-hour photo-op that  
started at 8 a.m., selling treats  
for which a portion of pro-  
ceeds would go to the local  
shelter.

McCutcheon expected  
her pet to do well with the  
bearded stranger topped in a  
red hat.

"As long as Santa rolls him-  
self in chicken, she'll be good,"  
she quipped.

There was no need for that.

Missy sat still — far better  
than some screaming, crying  
children Santa has had to deal  
with in recent weeks — and  
the photo session was over in

a matter of a couple of min-  
utes.

The attentions of cats and  
dogs were attempted to be  
captured by employees of the  
company taking photos by  
calling their names, whistling  
and shaking a tiny tambou-  
rine.

The experience for Santa  
with four-legged friends, said  
the bearded one early on,  
"will be a little different."

Most of the early arrivals  
at the mall kept calm as they  
waited. No loud meows or  
barks to be heard.

The five-month-old cock-  
poo of Carolyn Hann and her  
boyfriend, was among the  
quiet pack.

"Right now he's our baby,"  
Hann said of Murphy.

"They see us as family, so  
why not treat them the same.



GREG FURMINGER/  
STAFF PHOTO  
Missy, the  
three-year-  
old Yorkipoo  
of Sylvia  
McCutcheon,  
has her  
picture  
taken with  
Santa at  
Seaway Mall  
Saturday  
morning.

"It's a like a tradition in my  
family. All of our dogs have  
come to see Santa."

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# LOCAL NEWS

## This year I'm skipping Christmas

JOHN LAW  
QMI Agency Niagara

**Y**ou probably don't know Utah's Lisa Henderson. Just another mommy blogger writing about mommy stuff. Co-founder of the saccharine sweet website Over the Big Moon.

But aside from Bill Cosby, she might be this month's most hated person on the Internet because she had the audacity to cancel Christmas this year for her entitled, spoiled sons. No gifts from Santa. Everything going towards more needy children and causes.

"We are trying to teach them the pleasure of giving rather than continuing to feed their childhood desire for more," she wrote, before the backlash hit.

That makes her a villain? This woman is my hero this month.

You see, before Henderson's blog was even posted Nov. 24, my gal and I also made the difficult decision to cancel Christmas this year. While she's in a school we're one-income household. The line between psyche and expenses is now razor thin. Add a steady parade of car repairs and vet

bills, and it's a perfect storm of holiday misery.

It's during difficult stretches like this you realize what a financial and emotional drain Christmas can be. It wasn't easy, but we had to say no this year.

To be honest, I've been feeling burned out on Christmas for a while. Maybe a year off will recharge some festive batteries, because the burden of the season has sapped whatever joy there used to be.

Yes, the family time in Windsor is great. But to get there meant more debt, more stress, more exhaustion every year. I can't remember the last Christmas day I didn't spend on the 401. I can't remember the last Christmas that didn't leave me feeling wiped.

Is this what the day is supposed to be about? Sorry, I'm tapping out this year.

Which is why Henderson's blog struck the right note. She isn't ignoring Christmas, she's changing what it means in hopes her kids gain some perspective. Her family held a clothing drive in their neighbourhood. Their letters to Santa will ask him to find someone who needs or desires their gifts more. They will understand giving more than receiving.

When the feedback started rolling in, she added her kids "are in no way hurting for things. It's not like I took Christmas away from Tiny Tim here, folks."

The kids, in fact, are on board with this retroed Christmas: "They are learning exactly what we wanted them to learn, because they are not moping around feeling sorry for themselves. They are thinking of others."

It should be noted, her kids will still receive presents from the grandparents, but Santa will be bypassing their house Christmas Eve.

Henderson had to close the comments on her blog. I imagine she deleted the most vicious responses. I hope she hangs in there, because rejecting the narrative is never easy.

Tradition dictates you spend and gorge and overdo it this time of year. Hell, our economy depends on it. Saying "No" to this two-month ordeal — especially when you have the means to continue feeding it — is bravo parenting. From my child-free perch, admittedly.

There's one YouTube video that makes the rounds every Christmas that infuriates me. The parents film their insufferable brat as he unwraps



CLIFFORD SKARSTEDT/QMI AGENCY

It's not easy to skip Christmas, but John Law is taking a pass this year. And considering the stress and chaos this single holiday creates, he wonders why more people don't do it.

books on Christmas morning and throws a pint-size fit. "What the heck is that," he says while mom cackles with laughter. "That's not toys, that's books!"

He then pretends to spit on them.

"I don't get books for Christmas. I hate it." Every time I watch, I want to reach into the screen and

set fire to everything under their tree.

So this is Christmas? Sorry, Santa. We need a time out.

john.law@summedia.ca

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## LeafSource

### STOPS PAIN WITHIN DAYS!

*"It works! I'll take another two bottles please!"*

This coming from a customer who had tried every other natural remedy under the sun in the past few years to take away her pain, Ian, the owner of The Healthy Cupboard couldn't believe his ears. He had finally found the perfect product to stop his customer's miseries. This is what every owner of a health food store dreams about, a natural product that receives so many outstanding testimonials on such a wide variety of health issues. I had recommended a new product called LeafSource, which we recently started carrying. We have had tremendous success with this product, and almost everyone we have recommended it to over the last few months has come back and thanked us over and over again! said Ian. Before trying LeafSource, the woman had complained about her ongoing joint pain and was at her wits end. Although she had experienced some relief through the numerous natural remedies she had tried over the years, the pain would never fully go away. "She returned to my store, in tears, less than one week after buying LeafSource. I didn't know what

to make of this woman standing in front of me crying, until she told me that within a few days of taking LeafSource her pain started to disappear and within a week it was completely gone - as if it was never there." Ian goes on, "This coming from a woman whose painful joints and ongoing sciatica were so bad just one week earlier, that the pain was unbearable but now has completely subsided." By now you are probably wondering what is LeafSource and why is it so effective? LeafSource is a 100% natural product derived from a proprietary organic mineral composite with over ten years of university research. LeafSource helps regulate the inflammatory process and the body's ability to repair itself. The vast majority (70 - 80%) of the population over the age of 50 have joint problems - often called osteoarthritis. This is due to the natural (or unnatural) wear and tear on joint tissue that develops through the aging process. With joint inflammation, movement is limited and pain can be constant. LeafSource seems to have the ability to help people get their mobility

and zest for life back. Millions of people seek treatment for their joint and inflammation problems by resorting to expensive, toxic prescription drugs (i.e. NSAIDs) with multiple side effects. These range from nausea and vomiting to serious intestinal disorders (bleeding, gas, pain) and even kidney and liver failure. Isn't that too large a price to pay for a little pain relief? LeafSource is a safe alternative to these destructive anti-inflammatory drugs that cause more problems than they solve. There are absolutely no side effects and it doesn't interfere with any other medications. Controlled experiments and observations have revealed that LeafSource is a potent antiinflammatory that has been shown to bring a reduction to inflammation and pain within a few days. People notice great results in terms of more energy and less pain by taking anywhere from 2 to 6 capsules/day. Typical maintenance is usually 1 capsule twice daily. This product gets results! LeafSource is scientifically validated through more than 10 years of research at 4 universities, including the Department of

Pharmaceutical Sciences, Mercer University. Aside from its incredible anti-inflammatory and pain reducing ability, it has also been shown to improve the performance of your daily nutrition and vitamin programs. It helps increase the absorption of vital nutrients, which in turn helps these nutrients work better. Better absorption = better results! It's almost as if they have become supercharged! LeafSource has also been shown to help enhance energy levels, improve intestinal health, strengthen hair, skin and nails and improve immune function. To see someone go from intense pain to a new lease on life within a week is

truly incredible. Imagine being able to move freely without pain. Who wouldn't want to get out of bed in the morning with more energy? It's amazing how much of this stuff we take for granted, until it's gone! Ian adds, "I often recommend that LeafSource be taken with other natural joint products in order to help them work better and provide even faster relief. One of the things I hear most often from people who have tried LeafSource is they just plain feel better, have more energy and less pain. We're so confident, we guarantee LeafSource 100%! That alone should be enough to try this incredible product."



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